

MISSING EYE-WITNESS TO HALL CRIME SOUGHT BY COPS IN STATE-WIDE HUNT

Wanted Man Lived In Vacant House On Phillips Farm

By LEO J. CASEY,
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SOMERVILLE, N. J., Sept. 21.—Detectives are scouring New Jersey this afternoon for a man believed to have been an eye-witness to the killing of Rev. Edward W. Hall and Mrs. Eleanor R. Mills.

His identity is well known to Special Prosecutor Alexander Simpson and the other investigators, who expect to have him in custody within a few hours. It is possible he may be held as a material witness.

According to information received today, this man was in the farmhouse on the old Phillips estate the night the minister and his illicit sweetheart were shot to death as they kept a tryst under a crabapple tree.

Room Furnished

It was recalled today that when the bodies were discovered, it was noticed that one room of the abandoned house had been furnished and bore every indication of recent occupation.

Senator Simpson has been told that the man sought made his home there and that he must have seen and heard everything that took place just prior to and immediately following the double murder.

The Rev. J. Merwin Pettit, who succeeded Dr. Hall as pastor of the Church of St. John the Evangelist at New Brunswick, is being questioned concerning his activities with the four defendants indicted for the murders, their counsel and witnesses.

Admits Conferences

Dr. Pettit frankly admitted that he talked with several persons in the case, notably Miss Catherine Rastall, who was in De Russey's lane with Ralph V. Gorsline, vestryman, the night of the killings, but insists he did so as spiritual adviser.

"I am not interested in this case except as rector of the church in which several persons mentioned held membership," the minister declared.



Alex. Simpson Mrs. Frances Hall

clared. "I have never, at any time, tried to influence anybody in connection with the case."

A new witness appeared today in the person of a New Brunswick druggist, who declares he saw Henry Stevens in that city on the night of September 14, 1922, when the murders were committed. Heretofore the only evidence tending to show his presence near the scene was that of Mrs. Mary Demarest, who said she saw him the following morning.

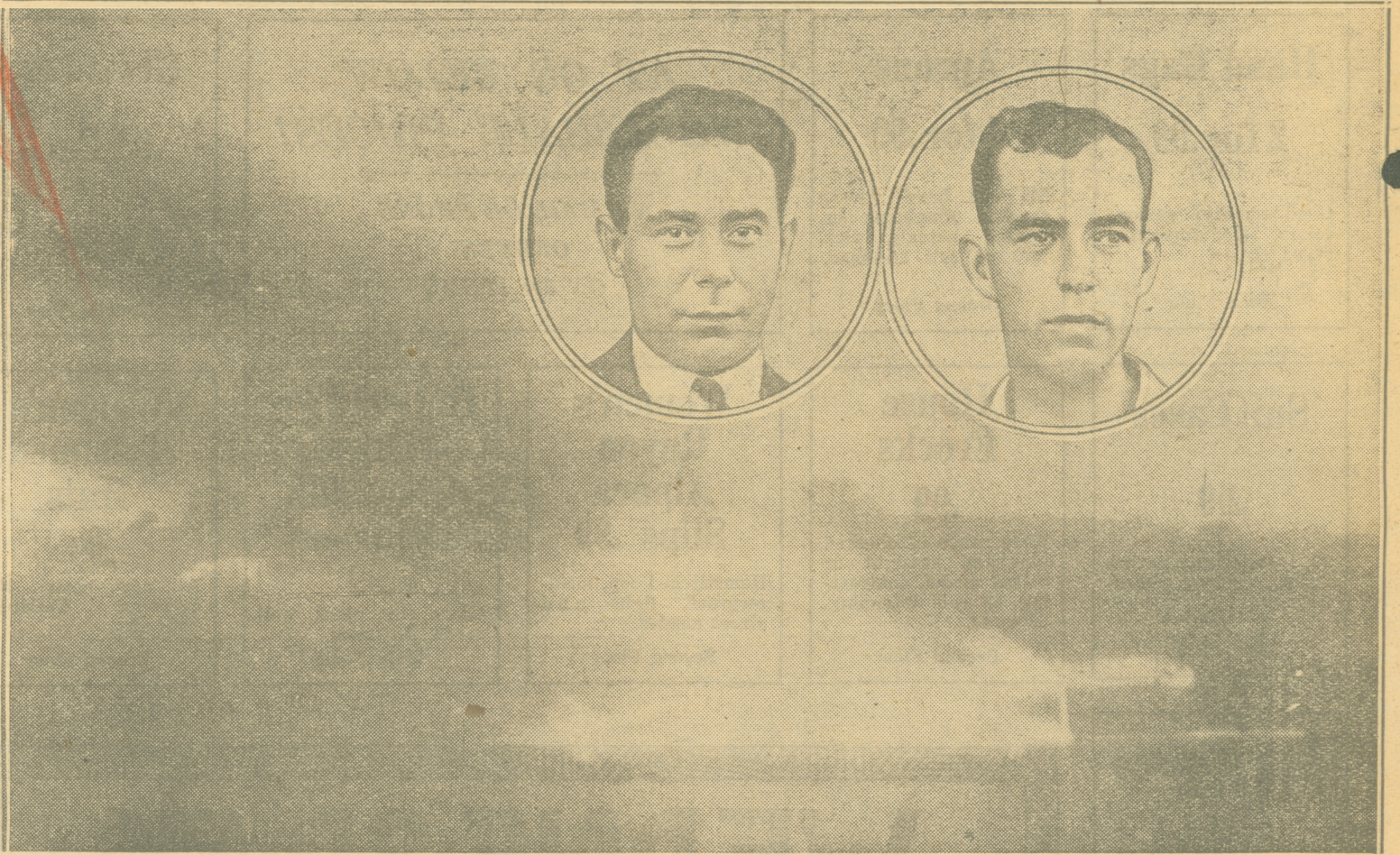
Probe Willie's Actions

Several New Brunswick firemen are to be interrogated about a conversation the late Capt. Michael Regan had with Willie Stevens just before the bodies of Dr. Hall and Mrs. Mills were found beneath the crabapple tree. At the first investigation Capt. Regan, who has since died, testified Willie had told him "something serious has happened up to our house, so don't mind the way I act."

The remark, it is said, was heard

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Two Burned to Death in Crash of Fonck Plane



TRAPPED IN A BLAZING COFFIN two members of the Fonck flight were burned to death early today as the big ship started on the 3,600-mile trip. A GRAPHIC photographer, on the spot when the plane burst into flames, took first pictures of the disaster. Picture above shows rapidly with which fire destroyed the huge machine. It had crumpled over barely a few seconds before the photograph was taken. Insets are those of Charles Clavier, radio operator (right) and Lieut. Jacob Islamoff, assistant navigator, who lost their lives. Capt. Fonck and Lieut. Curtin were saved.

Fonck Plane Destroyed By Fire, 2 Flyers Killed

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the radio man when we had extricated ourselves.

Exits in Rear

"In this connection, let us point out that there were four ample exits to which they had free access from their positions in the fuselage. By this time the flames were enveloping the plane and were of such intensity it was impossible to approach within thirty feet.

"It must be kept clearly in mind that from the time the plane left the brink of the depression until it was completely enveloped in flames was a matter of only a few seconds."

Before the smoke had blown away from the blackened wreckage, District Attorney Elvin N. Edwards, of Nassau county, with Coroner Walter R. Jones and other public officials, began the usual investigation.

Blame Only Fate

W. A. Bary, vice-president, and L. A. Shoumatoff, secretary-treasurer of the Sikorsky Manufacturing Corporation, made a formal statement in which they said they felt that "no one was to blame." Fate had dealt them a staggering blow. They did not say whether or not they would rebuild.

Those who witnessed the accident, including C. S. (Casey) Jones, veteran Curtiss test pilot, blamed it on the combination of a rough runway and extreme overloading, which placed too much stress on the auxiliary running gear under the tail of the plane.

The exact cause of the accident was a breaking of this gear. The wheels snapped under an impact with a bump. The left rudder dipped and broke. The plane fluttered

like a wounded bird and rolled into the gully. Thirty seconds later, after Fonck and Curtin were hurtled through the air, the flames coursed upward. The gasoline was ignited by contact with a red-hot exhaust manifold.

Three minutes later all was over.

Saw Two Burned to Death

The audience had watched two men being burned to death.

Fonck, who sent many enemies to their deaths during the World War, took the tragedy with amazing coolness.

"It could not be helped," he said through an interpreter. "It was fate. What more can I say?" He was puffing on a cigarette.

Taken to Courthouse

He and Curtin were taken to Nassau County Courthouse at Mineola by county policemen a short time later for questioning by Edwards. Members of the Sikorsky Corporation also were to be questioned. An inquest will be held Friday at 2 P. M.

It was revealed, shortly after the accident, that it was the second of the morning. While the ship was being taken from the hangars to the head of the runway, a "dolly" or wheel brace elevating the tail to prevent damage to the rudders and elevators, slipped out. The tail fell to the ground. A minute inspection resulted in a report that no damage had been caused.

The trip was ordered at 12.15 a. m. by Curtin, following a conference with Bary, Shoumatoff, George Mayrer, factory superintendent, and others.

Fonck Awakened Early

Fonck was in bed. He was awak-

ened and came to the field. Sikorsky was told of the proposed flight at 5 a. m. Gasoline tanks were filled. A crowd gathered, seemingly from nowhere, to watch the take-off.

There was cheering as the ship, shining even in the gray dusk, was tuned for the great flight. The motors puffed, snorted, roared and then settled into a hollow drone.

Fonck and Curtin took their places in the front cabin. Islamoff and Clavier climbed into the rear.

Fonck at the throttle sent the motors speeding.

The plane bumped and jogged down the field. It carried 13,000 pounds of gasoline. Its total weight was 28,860 pounds, one-third greater than normal capacity.

Couldn't Gain Speed

The wings carried the greatest square-foot load ever carried by an airplane, it was said.

This weight piled on to the running gear every time it struck a bump. Fonck stepped hard on the throttle, but it failed to come within fifteen miles an hour of the eighty-five miles required to lift it.

There was a thud as the auxiliary running gear snapped, a crunch as a rudder broke. Frightened, Fonck slowed. Then he sped up

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'Luck,' Say Flyers Of Narrow Escape

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hurt. I thought everything was all right until I smelled gas. Then I saw flames and I tried to figure out how to get ahead of the fire and behind the props without being cut up by the propellers, which were still whirling around.

"I got behind the props and then got out from the plane itself into the tall grass."

Capt. Fonck, commander of the

expedition, broke in, speaking in French:—

"I tried to hold her," he said, excitedly. "I saw I couldn't. So I eased her down. Then a wheel collapsed and knocked off the left rudder."

"That was certainly a close call," he was told.

"Oh, you get used to it," Capt. Fonck continued. "The motor was good. I pulled at the controls. No, I blame no one for this accident. No one."

R. C. Crate, Capt. Fonck's secretary, broke in.

"I saw the wheel come off," he declared. Capt. Fonck went on:—

"The plane didn't go over hard. She eased over. These are the experiences of life. One must go through them."

Motors Were O K

George Honeur, motor expert, commented on Capt. Fonck's statement, saying:—

"All I can do is uphold what Capt. Fonck said. There was no trouble with the motors."

"But they all should have got out. Capt. Fonck and Lieut. Curtin were in the forward part of the cabin and if the other two men had been with them, they, too, might have escaped."

The work of Clavier and Islamoff kept them in the rear of the cabin at the take-off, it was explained.

Lieut. Curtin broke in on the conversation with a slow, easy drawl.

"This is my formal statement," he announced. "The plane at full speed reached a speed of only 65 miles an hour on the runway, three-quarters of the way down."

"It seemed as though one wheel collapsed and the plane veered to the left. The ship veered over on its right wing. The gas tank was ruptured and gas came running out."

"I have nothing but commendation for Capt. Fonck and distress at the death of our colleagues. I stand ready to go with the captain again, however, in a ship constructed by the Sikorsky company."